

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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AS THANKSGIVING APPROACHES, TRAVELERS DON'T WANT LEFTOVER WEAPONS ON PLANES

Markey Asks for Details on Safety Inspections of the Flights that Carried Nathaniel Heatwole's Box-cutters

Washington, D.C.: Representative Edward Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the Select Committee on Homeland Security, today sent a letter to the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to request information about the pre-flight security inspections of aircraft, which have been required since the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Rep. Markey's letter follows the revelation that box cutters and other prohibited items placed aboard Southwest Airlines flights by college student Nathaniel Heatwole remained undetected for more than a month despite pre-flight inspection requirements. The letter to TSA seeks details about TSA enforcement of pre-flight inspection requirements for all major U.S.-based commercial passenger air carriers.

"It very important to understand how well the Transportation Security Administration has been monitoring the pre-flight inspections of passenger cabins that airlines have been required to conduct since shortly after September 11, 2001. As the holiday travel season approaches, millions of Americans will be traveling on airplanes to visit family and loved ones. The American people deserve to have confidence that the planes they are boarding have been swept clean of box-cutters and other dangerous weapons. The Heatwole case suggests that TSA may not be ensuring that pre-flight inspections are properly conducted. I am worried that the recent instances where dangerous items have been found on passenger planes indicate that the commercial airlines and TSA are not in compliance with current federal regulations requiring pre-flight inspections," Rep. Markey said.

"With continued intelligence warnings that Al Qaeda places passenger and cargo planes at the top of its terrorist target list, it's essential that pre-flight inspections of aircraft are thoroughly performed by well-trained personnel. Dangerous items should not remain undetected inside aircraft for weeks, days, or even hours, as they were in the Heatwole case. For the sake of the passengers and for the sake of the financial health of the airline industry, TSA needs to ensure that airlines don't just flip over a few seat cushions, but fully inspect the inside of the aircraft before the passengers board. As Thanksgiving approaches, travelers don't want leftover weapons on the passenger planes they board," Rep. Markey concluded.

The letter can be found at www.house.gov/markey.

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